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Rep. George Miller (D-CA) Opening Statement on the Organizational Meeting for the 113th Congress

WASHINGTON, DC -- Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the senior Democrat of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce for the organizational meeting to adopt the committee rules, oversight plan, and announce subcommittee assignments for the 113th Congress.

Good morning, Chairman Kline. Thank you for that introduction.

It is an honor and a privilege to continue to serve as the senior Democratic member of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

I would like to join Chairman Kline in welcoming the new and returning members of the committee for the 113th Congress.

We serve on a committee that affects people's everyday lives. What we do or don't do in this committee will have real implications for millions of Americans. Our action or inaction affects:

- Whether our youngest and most vulnerable citizens have a fair shot in early childhood development;
- Whether all American students have an equal opportunity to receive a quality education;
- Whether they have the means to obtain the higher education or vocational skills necessary to compete in the global economy;
- Whether there are sufficient job opportunities for everyone who wants to work;
- Whether job candidates and workers are judged on their merits, not their gender, race, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics;
- Whether fundamental human rights will be respected on the job;
- Whether workplaces are safe and healthy;
- Whether work itself is rewarded with fair pay, health care security, and a dignified retirement.

On all of these issues, I remain hopeful that we can work together to advance an agenda that grows and strengthens the middle class, that makes a positive difference in people's lives.

This Congress, the committee's plate is full.

For example, the committee must attend to a number of major reauthorizations: the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Higher Education Act, and the Workforce Investment Act, to name a few.

We must work together to protect miners' safety and health.

It's also vital that the committee looks at the significant economic issues working families are facing.

This includes ensuring that working people have access to good-quality jobs.

It also means paying attention to the growing gap between corporate profits and workers' pay, between rising productivity and stagnant or falling compensation.

These trends are unsustainable for a country that depends on a broad and growing middle class for its economic strength.

For our committee, the challenges are many. But so are the opportunities to make a real difference in people's lives.

As we saw during the last Congress, major issues are unlikely to get resolved unless there is a serious effort to work together, across party lines.

It is has been my experience that working in a bipartisan way is often the key to legislative success. This is especially true during an era of divided government.

I recognize that working together is often easier said than done.

We have genuine differences in philosophy, in priorities. There will undoubtedly be times that we will be at loggerheads, unable to agree on the best policy choices.

But I believe that, so long as we can find common goals, of which there are many, we can often find the common ground to get things done.

That's what the American people expect. There really is no other choice.

We have a big job ahead of us.

I look forward to working with Chairman Kline and members on both sides of the aisle to make sure this is a productive and successful Congress for the American people.

<http://democrats.edworkforce.house.gov/>

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